

# *The E-Rate Program*

## **Tips for Success**

Fall 2011 Applicant Trainings

## Overview

- Program tips
- Filing tips
- Resources

*Tips for Success*

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# Program Tips

## Review the summary program information on the website

- [Program Overview](#) is a high-level description of the program, together with a general program timeline.
- [Application Process Flow Chart](#) is a graphic depiction of the progression of forms that applicants and service providers must file.
- [Applicant Step-by-Step Process](#) provides links to more detailed information about each step in the process.
- [Eligible Services List](#) contains descriptions of the eligible products and services for each funding year.
- [Acronyms & Terms](#) defines common program terms.

# Schools and Libraries website



Universal Service Administrative Company

*Helping Keep Americans Connected*

[Home](#) | [Need Help?](#) [Search](#)



**Schools and Libraries**

[Schools and Library Applicants](#)

[Service Providers](#)

**About the Schools and Libraries Program:**

- Overview of the Program
- Overview of the Process
- Outreach and Training
- HATS Outreach
- Filing Appeals
- Understanding Audits

**Schools and Libraries Tools:**

- Apply Online
- Commitments
- Submit a Question
- Latest News
- Calendar/Reminders
- Required Forms
- Reference Area
- Search Tools
- Changes and Corrections
- Suspensions and Debarments
- Contact Us

**Applicants**

The Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund makes discounts available to eligible schools and libraries for telecommunication services, Internet access, and internal connections. The program is intended to ensure that schools and libraries have access to affordable telecommunications and information services.

**Service Providers**

The Schools and Libraries Program reimburses telecommunications, Internet access, and internal connections providers for discounts on eligible services provided to schools and libraries. While schools and libraries apply for these discounts, USAC works in conjunction with service providers to make sure these discounts are passed on to program participants.

**Latest News, Important Notices, and Reminders**

	<b>FCC Update:</b>	<a href="#">FCC Authorizes Additional Funds for FY2010 and FY2011 (8/24/11)</a>
	<b>Training Update:</b>	<a href="#">Registration for Washington DC, Los Angeles, and Newark Fall Training Sessions Has Closed (8/5/11)</a>
	<b>Latest News:</b>	<a href="#">USAC Releases First Commitments for Funding Year 2011 in the Schools and Libraries Program (6/14/11)</a>

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# Schools and Libraries website



The screenshot shows the USAC website's 'Schools and Libraries' section. A black box highlights the 'About the Schools and Libraries Program:' link in the left sidebar. An arrow points from this box to a larger callout on the right. The website content includes a header with 'USAC Universal Service Administrative Company' and 'Helping Keep Americans Connected'. Below the header are tabs for 'Schools and Libraries', 'Schools and Library Applicants', and 'Service Providers'. The main content area is divided into sections for 'Applicants' and 'Service Providers', both describing the program's purpose and benefits. A 'Latest News, Important Notices, and Reminders' section is also visible, featuring updates from the FCC and USAC. The footer contains copyright information and links to privacy policy, sitemap, website feedback, website tour, and contact us.

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## REVIEW your documentation from previous years

- If your entity has filed before, you can use the forms and other paperwork in your files as a guide.
  - If your paperwork is not well organized, you can use the [E-Rate Binder table of contents](#) to organize it.
  - You can access copies of many of your previously filed program forms from the [Search Tools](#) and [Apply Online](#) web pages.
- If your entity has not filed before, start small (e.g., file for telephones and Internet access in your first year).

## RETAIN your documentation from previous years

- You are required to keep copies of documentation related to your applications for five years after the last date to receive service.
  - Some documents must be kept longer (e.g., a multi-year contract will apply to more than one funding year).
  - The [E-Rate Binder](#) provides a suggested list of documents to keep.



## Practice using the search tools on the website

- [Search Form 470](#) to find and view a particular Form 470.
- [Form 471 Application Status](#) to monitor the status of your filed forms.
- [Billed Entity Search](#) to locate entity numbers.
- [Deadlines](#) to determine or calculate deadlines for program forms.
- [SPIN Contact Search](#) for service provider information.
- [Data Retrieval Tool](#) and [Commitments Search](#) tool for information on funding and status of forms.

# Schools and Libraries website



## Schools and Libraries Tools:

- [Apply Online](#)
- [Commitments](#)
- [Submit a Question](#)
- [Latest News](#)
- [Calendar/Reminders](#)
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### Search Tools

The following tools will assist Schools and Libraries Program participants in applying for discounts, tracking disbursements, and obtaining other frequently requested information.

Name of Tool	Description
<a href="#">Search Commitments</a>	This tool allows searches for commitment data by funding year and applicant name, city, state, zip and/or wave number.
<a href="#">Data Retrieval Tool</a>	This tool allows searches for various information related to applications, funding commitments and disbursements.
<a href="#">Deadlines</a>	This tool was designed to explain and help you calculate deadlines for Universal Service forms and actions.

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# Filing Tips

## Prepare in advance for the filing window

- Locate or request information you will need (e.g., entity numbers for new entities, NCES and FSCS codes, FCC Registration Numbers).
- Determine actions that may be required or documents to review before you file (e.g., board approvals, technology plan approvals, procurement requirements) and allow enough time to complete them.
- Gather the documentation necessary to complete forms (e.g., copies of contracts, tech plan approval letters).

## Prepare in advance for the filing window (continued)

- If you are a member of a consortium:
  - In general, your consortium leader must collect the following:
    - A Letter of Agency from each member showing authorization to perform actions on the member's behalf
    - A Form 479 to provide information on compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act
  - Complete these forms promptly upon request so that your consortium leader can timely file program forms.

## Prepare in advance for the filing window (continued)

- Review FCC Form 470 and FCC Form 471 to understand what actions you must undertake – for example:
  - Writing a technology plan
  - Ensuring CIPA compliance
  - Running an open and fair competitive bidding process and evaluating bids
  - Negotiating a contract for services other than those provided under tariff or a month-to-month arrangement

## Prepare in advance for the filing window (continued)

- Review FCC Form 470 and FCC Form 471 to collect the information you will need – for example:
  - Student eligibility for the National School Lunch Program
  - Urban or rural status
  - Speed of broadband connections
  - Demographic information (public, private, tribal, etc.)
  - Other necessary information ([adult education, juvenile justice, pre-Kindergarten, Head Start, alternative discount mechanism, non-instructional facilities](#))

## Prepare in advance for the filing window (continued)

- File an FCC Form 470 now (even before the filing window opens) for the services you know you will need.
  - You can file for some services now if you know what you need and wait to file for other services (i.e., you do not have to put ALL services on ONE FCC Form 470).
    - You will have less work to do closer to the window.
    - If your situation changes, you will have time to cancel the form (if necessary) and/or file a new or additional form.



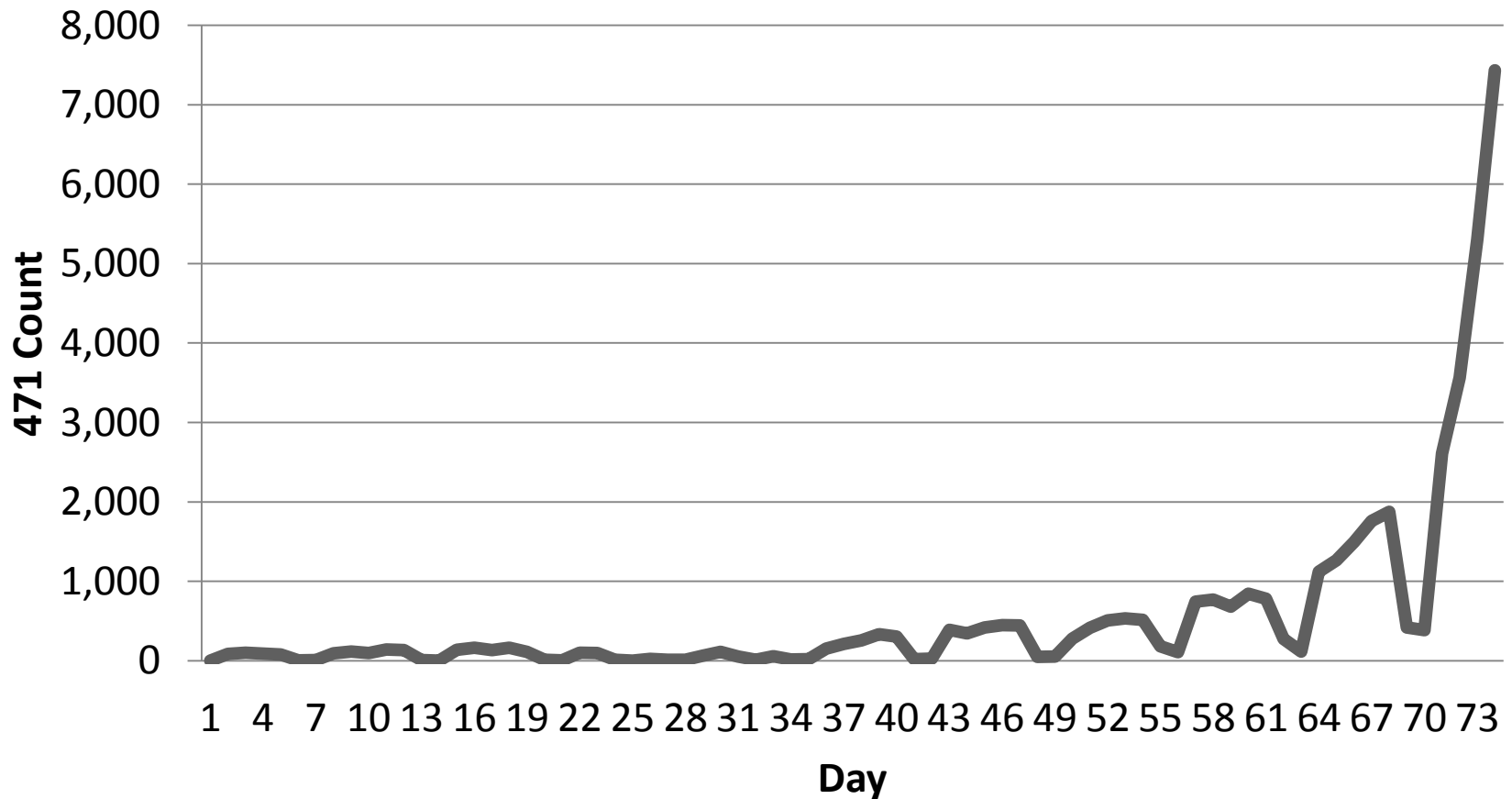
## Prepare in advance for the filing window (continued)

- Determine if you are eligible to purchase from a state master contract signed pursuant to a state-filed FCC Form 470.
  - If so, you can cite the state FCC Form 470 rather than doing one of your own.

## File your FCC Form 471 early in the window

- If you get ready to file your form and realize that you don't have all the information you need to complete it, you will have more time to collect the information.
- USAC starts review of applications soon after the window opens.
- You increase the likelihood of an earlier decision.
- The online system and the Client Service Bureau are much busier during the last week of the window and may take longer to respond (e.g., answer questions, create entity numbers, check receipt status of a paper form).

# 471s Filed During a Typical Window



Data from FY2009 filing window

## Familiarize yourself with program deadlines

- You must wait at least 28 days after your FCC Form 470 is posted or your RFP is issued before you close your competitive bidding process, select a vendor, and sign/submit your Form 471
- FCC Form 471 and Item 21 attachments must be filed within the filing window.

## Familiarize yourself with program deadlines

- FCC Form 486 must be filed no later than 120 days after the later of (1) the service start date or (2) the FCDL date.
- Invoices (FCC Forms 472/474) must be filed no later than 120 days after (1) the last date that the applicant can receive service from the provider in the funding year at issue or (2) the Form 486 Notification Letter date.

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# Resources

## Client Service Bureau

- Telephone: 1-888-203-8100
  - Hours are 8:00 am – 8:00 pm ET weekdays
  - Extended hours during the last week of the filing window
- Email: [Submit a Question](#)
- Guidance:
  - Program guidance questions
  - Entity number and consultant number creation
  - Forms status

## USAC's Billing, Collections, and Disbursement Department

- Telephone: 1-888-641-8722
  - Service providers can get assistance filing FCC Forms 498, 499-A, and 499-Q
  - Service providers must update their FCC Forms 498 to:
    - Allow USAC to feature correct contact information on the SPIN Contact Search tool
    - Provide electronic banking information to allow USAC to process payments
    - Receive online access to certain functions, e.g., approve BEAR Forms filed online



## Schools and Libraries website

- [www.usac.org/sl](http://www.usac.org/sl)
- Program overview:
  - [School and Library Applicants](#)
  - [Service Providers](#)
- Program guidance documents: [Reference Area](#)
- [Schools and Libraries News Briefs](#)
  - Issued weekly each Friday afternoon
  - Special editions and updates issued as needed
  - Contain timely information and other guidance
- FCC website: [List of Universal Service appeal decisions](#)

## Schools and Libraries website

- Samples, examples, and training videos
  - Samples documents include technology plans and example documents include bid evaluation matrices.
  - Training videos either (1) demonstrate how to fill out and file a program form or (2) cover a specific program topic using a narrated presentation.

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# **Questions?**